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Dear Chairwoman MacDonald and Members of the Law and Justice Interim Committee:

I am representing myself at this time and not Friends and Families Matter. I am a Licensed Clinical Professional Counselor in the State of Montana. I was employed as a mental health counselor at Crossroads Correctional Center in Shelby owned by Corrections Corporation of America from November 6<sup>th</sup> 2012 until December 23, 2013. I resigned due to what I believed was the unethical treatment of the inmates, especially those who suffer with mental health disorders.

Security staff often did not follow policy with mental health clients, especially with inmates on suicide watch. Two inmates who were decompensating mentally were kept at CCA rather than transferred to MSP where they could and should have received a higher level of care. The other issues that I witnessed or heard complaints about from a vast majority of the inmates include:

- inaccurate record keeping on medications; *medications not being given to inmates*
- inconsistent times and announcement of pill calls, especially at night, which often led to inmates not receiving their medications;
- abusive treatment of inmates by staff and parole board members;
- illegal treatment recommendations;
- valid grievances not being addressed or handled correctly;
- very poor food quality and inmate nutritional issues;
- lack of transparency and inappropriate, if not fraudulent, management of the inmate welfare fund.

I had three different supervisors in the 13 months I was employed there, and none addressed the many valid issues brought to them. Each of these supervisors, along with many of the staff, referred to the inmates as "liars" and dismissed serious matters without even minimal effort to determine whether the complaints were valid. This is unethical to say the least, if not contrary to acceptable practices and sound policy, and reflects the unprofessional attitude that is pervasive at CCC.

Ninety-five percent of these inmates will be released and back in our communities; and many of them worse off than they went in because of the way they were mistreated while incarcerated. The practices I witnessed at CCC are utterly failing the public interest and will do nothing but make the risk of recidivism and of additional victims higher. Accountability for criminal action is necessary; abuse and other unethical treatment of inmates is modeling the very behavior that many of the inmates are serving time for.

I support, and I hope you will support, a full investigation of the Crossroads Correctional Center in Shelby and of the Corrections Corporation of America, which runs it. In my opinion, based on my experience inside CCC, much can be and has been deliberately hidden from the one on-site DOC contract compliance officer and occasional auditors who have been taken on carefully guided tours; and accreditation or other inspections are meaningless when CCC staff have advanced warning and can pick and choose what files and records are examined.

On the back of this letter is a more detailed description of what I witnessed and/or took complaints about from 80% my clients/inmates while I was employed at CCC in Shelby. I hope you will take the time to read and consider these points during your work session.

Sincerely,

  
Patricia Swan-Smith

Law and Justice meeting  
June 27, 2014

Exhibit 13

## **MORE DETAIL**

1. Inmates not getting their medications and the records showing “NS” no-show for inmates in solitary confinement when the medications are taken to the inmate in person. They either refuse or take the medication; no-show is not possible.
2. Inmates complained that pill call was often either not announced, announced in a manner that many could not hear it, and/or so late in the evening that some skipped medications at night because they were already in bed. This undermines their health and treatment progress.
3. Grievances and issues not addressed appropriately. For example staff calling inmates names such as “child molester” in front of other inmates, misuse of Inmate Welfare Fund issues/complaints, hostility toward inmates especially toward those who came in for psychiatry appointments, staff cussing and at times screaming at inmates.
4. Consistent complaints from inmates about the food quality and diets. This also undermines an inmate’s emotional and mental stability and the ability to comply with requirements.
5. Visitation and finances (postage, phone) is often a topic of complaint.
6. The Parole Board has recommended treatment as a pre-condition of parole when the Board members are not licensed to make such treatment recommendations, and Board members have degraded the treatment recommendations of professionals.
7. All of this is indicative of why Corrections Corporation of America has lost numerous contracts over the past several years, one of which was a facility Boise, Idaho, due to a number of infractions. Although Montana’s DOC may have a different contract and compliance approach, the problems I saw inside CCC are serious and demand attention. Montana taxpayers are not getting a quality product, the goal of corrections is not being well-served, and Montana families (and therefore our communities) are at greater risk.